Architectural Style in Kansas

This is the fourth in a series of architectural style articles that will be published in *Kansas Preservation*. The articles are designed to provide general background information about architectural style and also may be used as context statements for National Register nominations.

The following publications may helpful for determining and describing style:

Marcus Whiffen's *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (M. I. T. Press, Cambridge, 1969).

John Blumenson's *Identifying American Architecture* (American Association of State and Local History, Nashville, 1977).

Cyril Harris' *Dictionary of Architecture and Construction* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1975).

John Poppeliers and S. Allen Chambers' *What Style is It?* (Preservation Press, Washington, DC, 1983).

Virginia and Lee McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* (Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York, 1984).

The American Foursquare is the earliest Prairie style form and developed into the most common vernacular version. In vernacular examples, hipped dormers are common, as are full-width, single story front porches and double hung sash windows.

This ca. 1916 postcard view shows the Walt Mason House in Emporia. The 1912 structure, which was designed by local architect Henry Brinkman, has a simple rectangular plan, hipped roof, and a symmetrical facade.

The Foursquare

Timelessly Understated Homes

The American Foursquare is an indigenous domestic design that was built in cities, suburbs, and the countryside between 1900-1925. Foursquares were popularized by speculative developers, plan book designers, and mail order houses. Mail order catalogues such as Radford, Sears, Wards, and Aladdin all offered variants of the Foursquare plan. Like the bungalow, the Foursquare offered a reliable, affordable, well-planned house for the burgeoning American middle class.

The American Foursquare is the earliest Prairie style form developed into the most common vernacular version. In vernacular examples, dormers are common, as are full-width, single-story front porches, and double-hung sash windows. Vernacular homes are often two full stories in height with a large attic and stand upon a raised basement.

In its simplest form the Foursquare is a two-story house with the same four-room floor plan on each floor. The cube form is surmounted by a hipped roof that may be pierced with dormers on all four slopes or only on the front. Deep overhanging eaves accentuated with large brackets define the Foursquare. A front porch spans the entire facade, supported by classically styled pillars or columns. Frame, narrow clapboard sheathing is the most common exterior treatment used on

Foursquare

(Top) Hutchinson's John Graber House is an example of the American Foursquare type. The house has a simple square plan, a moderate-pitched hip roof, and symmetrical facade. A one-story hipped roof porch adorns the facade.

(Above) In its simplest form the Foursquare is a two-story house with the same four-room floor plan on each floor. The cube form is surmounted by a hip roof which may be pierced with dormers on all slopes or only on the front.

(Left) The S. P. Gebhart House, located in Pratt, is a finely crafted example of the popular early twentieth century Foursquare and a rare local example of a full-blow Colonial Revival structure.

Glossary

Belt course - a horizontal band across or around a building

Palladian window - a three-part window of Neo-Classical style where the middle window is arched and taller

Pantile - a roofing tile which has the shape of an "S" laid on its side

Foursquares, but brick and stone examples are also found.

Foursquares are adaptable constructions and can wear the stylistic attributes of the Colonial Revival, Prairie, Craftsman, Mission, and Italian Renaissance styles. Elegant window, porch, and roof treatments serve to distinguish an otherwise straightforward domicile. Palladian windows; pantile roofs; multi-paned upper sash, double-hung windows; belt courses; and elaborate beveled glass front doors were all components of an upscale Foursquare interpretation.

The Kansas examples of the Foursquare tend to occur within the first decade of the twentieth century. Historic districts like Topeka's Holliday Park and the 900 block of North Seventh Street in Garden City contain solid, builder examples of the Foursquare type.

Hutchinson's John Graber House was built in 1910. The house has a simple square plan, a moderate-pitched hipped roof and symmetrical facade. A one-story hipped roof porch adorns the facade. The front entrance is off centered and is a conspicuous focal point of the facade.

Across the state there are numerous examples of more distinctive, architect/builder designed renditions of the Foursquare. In Emporia, the 1912 brick and stucco Foursquare designed by local architect Henry W. Brinkman for poet and writer Walt Mason incorporates a triple window grouping in the center second floor bay to enhance its massive appearance. The impression of strength and substance is demonstrated further by the solid porte cochere that projects to one side and the large brick pillars that support the porch.

The Foursquare was meant to offer the appearance of massiveness and

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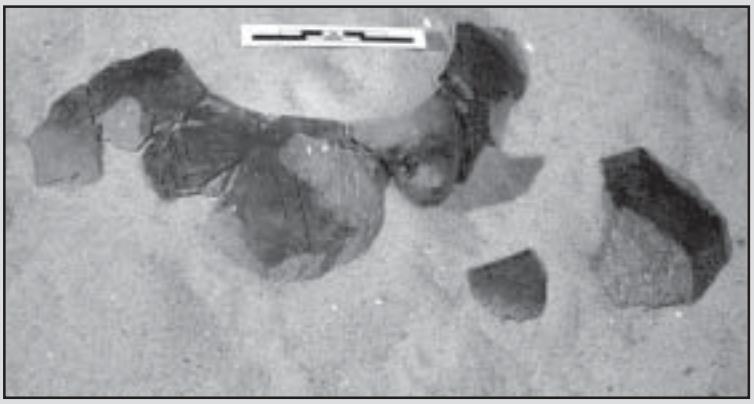

***Sherds fit together to forma segment of the bowl rim. The incised lines and modeled human face decorate the shoulder.* Photo by Craig Cooper.**

shoulder. A short, solid cylindrical handle has a simple representation of a human face on the end. One is tempted to wonder why only one pot—which seems to be a special vessel at that—is represented here. However, a less obvious but perhaps more relevant question exists. We know that in this area food was cooked directly in the fire, therefore what was a pot used for at all? A good guess would be to boil corn that might have been brought with the people who used this site. Residues, perhaps from whatever was cooked in the pot, were found on both the interior and exterior of the vessel and will be analyzed to try to determine if this guess is correct.

The chipped stone artifacts include several small projectile points, true arrowheads in this case; a few drills; some large flakes that were modified to produce single-use tools; and unmodified, mostly small flakes that tended to occur in clusters and probably represent individual episodes of tool-making or repair. The drills are particularly interesting. They are not common on Middle Ceramic period sites used over a period of years, so what they were being used for and why at least three of them were lost or discarded on this short-term-use site is another question to be addressed during the analysis.

The types of artifacts found here should allow us to determine cultural affiliation, but in this case they do not. Pottery usually is the best indicator. Here, however, while the effigy is of a form known from some northwest Missouri sites—and may be the first of its kind reported in Kansas—shell-tempered pottery, including vessels with shoulder-incised decoration, is found over a large area of the upper Midwest and eastern Plains and as far west in Kansas as the Salina/Minneapolis area. It is not unique to any culture defined in the region. The chipped stone tools likewise are not unique to a specific culture.

If we have any good clue as to who was here, it comes from the raw material used for making the stone tools. All this material is chert, or flint, that outcrops in the Flint Hills immediately west of the site. Chipped stone tools in the permanent house sites of this period in an area from around Manhattan to Salina/Minneapolis are usually made of Flint Hills cherts, and shell-tempered vessels sometimes occur in these sites as well. The popular perception of these house sites is that people were settled at them year-round and that they relied on bison, deer, and other mammals, along with corn and several other crop plants. While this is not totally wrong, it is increasingly recognized that the subsistence base was more diverse and that fish and mussels were important in the diet. We also are now starting to sense that people at this time did move around some. We do not yet understand this very well, however, and the Claussen site excavation provides some of the best evidence to date for what Middle Ceramic period people of eastern Kansas were doing away from their farms.

This article was prepared by Dr. Donna Roper, adjunct professor of anthropology at Kansas State University. In addition to occasional university teaching, she does contract archeological work and is engaged in research on several aspects of Middle and Late Ceramic period prehistory in Kansas and Nebraska. Her work at the Claussen site is under contract with the Kansas Anthropological Association.

2004 Heritage Trust Fund Deadlines Near

The deadline for submitting applications for the 2004 round of Heritage Trust Fund grants is March 1, 2004. To be eligible for consideration, applications must be complete and postmarked by that date. Hand-delivered applications must be received before 5 p.m. on that date.

Anyone submitting a preliminary application for staff review must do so by January 15, 2004. Preliminary applications are not required but are highly encouraged.

All properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the Register of Historic Kansas Places, except for those owned by the state or federal governments, are eligible to apply for these funds. This is a highly competitive program; usually around 25 to 33 percent of the applications are funded. Presently it appears that approximately $1 million will be available to award in the 2004 round.

The final workshop for this round of the Heritage Trust Fund grant program begins at 2 p.m. on Thursday, January 8, 2004, on the second floor of the Potawatomi Baptist Mission (Koch Education Center) at the Kansas History Center, 6425 S. W. Sixth, Topeka.

Questions about the Heritage Trust Fund application process may be directed to Grants Manager Teresa Kiss at (785) 272-8681 Ext. 216 or tkiss@kshs.org.

The Foursquare

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stability. This impression was achieved through shape and reinforced by heavy roof lines and eaves. Additional mass could be gained by adding more porch columns or using thick pillars in their stead.

A popular, pervasive, yet understated residential building type, the Foursquare continues to house families throughout the state. In many respects its simple form and clean lines are timeless.

This article was prepared by Martha Hagedorn-Krass, the architectural historian with the Kansas State Historical Society. Electronic versions of the article are available by contacting her at mkrass@kshs.org.